

Devotions with Matt

April 25, 2020

BLESSED

“Be good!” That’s the message when it comes to religion. Do the right thing. Be a good person. Be moral and righteous and holy. If you do these things you will be blessed. If not, you will be cursed. And if not cursed, you will be looked at and thought of as someone who is not quite up to par with the religious guidelines and laws. That’s the message of most, if not all, religions- save one- Christianity.

One day Jesus is out in the countryside and a crowd gathers around him. They saw His miracles, they experienced His healings and heard about His power. Now they want to hear what He says. So, Jesus looks around and sees them all, climbs higher on the mountainside so He can be clearly heard and starts teaching. The message they heard that day was different from every other message they had heard before. This lesson wasn’t about The Law. It wasn’t about doing good or being a better person. It wasn’t about how man must strive to live up to God’s standards, God’s holiness, and God’s righteousness. It wasn’t about how when one fails at reaching that lofty plateau, and all will fail, God will either smite you, disown you, pull away from you or punish you. It wasn’t about sacrifice or hard work. To be honest, it really wasn’t about the crowd at all. It was about God and God’s great grace.

In Matthew Chapter 5, Jesus sits on the mountainside and begins to teach what is now called the Beatitudes. The word Beatitude means blessing or blessedness. Jesus begins to teach that day about God and His blessings. It was probably a huge shock to the crowd that day, and a shock to us today, that the ones who receive God’s blessings are not the greatest among us. They are not the most saintly, the most pious or the most righteous. Those are our standards. We bless and praise those who stand out as most religious. God sees it the exact opposite.

The Pharisees were great example of this. They were righteous, Law-abiding and legalistic. They knew The Law inside out. They spent hours upon hours, days upon days and years upon years studying the Torah and could recite it backwards and forwards. When someone saw a Pharisee the first thought that entered their head was, “There’s a religious person”. But the Pharisees were whom Jesus had his harshest words, His harshest critiques. They looked great on the outside from a religion standpoint, but their hearts were far away from God. They were religious, but not honest about their true spiritual condition.

Jesus climbs the mountainside and declares that it is not those who are religious, righteous and holy on the outside who are blessed. It is those who are broken, hurting and lost. It is the humble, the weak and the downtrodden who receive God’s blessings. This blew the minds of those in the crowd that day and it should blow our minds today.

What Jesus is saying in the Beatitudes is that God will meet you where you are. You don’t have to earn your way up to Him. You don’t have to try to be religious. You don’t have to be a “good” person. You don’t have to climb the stairway to heaven to reach God. God is coming, and has come, for you. He has stooped down from



His highest place to our lowly place. It doesn't matter what you have done in the past. It doesn't matter what kind of person you have been. It doesn't matter if you are religious or not. God has come down to meet us all in our broken condition. He has come to rescue us from it. He has come to show us what love and life are truly to be. He has come to enter our broken hearts and heal them. He has come to bless us. That is grace.

There is no way to earn what God is blessing us with. There is no way for us to become good enough to make God happy with us. There is no amount of moralism or legalism that can earn His favor. No amount of religiosity or acts of righteousness can earn our salvation. The only way to receive God's blessings upon our lives is to recognize and accept our broken condition. The only way we are blessed is to receive His blessings and understand we can't earn them. It is into an honest, contrite and open heart where God blesses the deepest.

That is God's grace. Wherever you are today, God wants to meet you there and bless you.

“And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” John 1:16

In Christ,

Matt